

TESTIMONY OF ROCKS.

REV. DR. TALMAGE ON THE GEOLOGY OF THE BIBLE.

A Sermon of Interest to all, Showing That Geology Confirms the Truth of the Word of God—The Rock of Ages.

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The throngs coming to Dr. Talmage's preaching services at the first Presbyterian church are all the time increasing and far beyond the capacity of his church to hold. In this sermon he discusses a subject interesting to all—viz., "The Geology of the Bible; or, God Among the Rocks." The text is II Samuel vi, 7: "And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error, and there he died by the ark of God."

A band of music is coming down the road, cornets blown, timbrels struck, harps thrummed and cymbals clapped, all led on by David, who was himself a musician. They are ahead of a wagon on which is the sacred ark called the ark. The yoke of oxen drawing the wagon imperiled it. Some critics say that the oxen kicked, being struck with the driver's goad, but my knowledge of oxen leads me to say that if on a hot day they see a shadow of a tree or wall, they are apt to suddenly shy off to get the coolness of the shadow. I think these oxen so suddenly turned that the ark seemed about to upset, and be thrown to the ground. Uzzah rushed forward and laid hold of the ark to keep it upright. But he had no right to do so. A special command had been given by the Lord that no one save the priest under any circumstances should touch that box. Nervous and excited and irreverent, Uzzah disobeyed when he took hold of the ark, and he died as a consequence. In all ages, and never more so than in our own day, there are good people all the time afraid that the Holy Bible, which is the sacred ark of our time, will be upset, and they have been a long while afraid that science, and especially geology, would overthrow it.

While we are not forbidden to touch the Holy Book and, on the contrary, are urged to fondle and study it, any one who is afraid of the overthrow of the book is greatly offending the Lord with his unbelief. The oxen have not yet been yoked which can upset that ark of the world's salvation. Written by the Lord Almighty, he is going to protect it until its mission is fulfilled and there shall be no more need of a Bible because all its prophecies will have been fulfilled and the human race will have exchanged worlds. A trumpet and a violin are very different instruments, but they may be played in perfect accord. So the Bible account of the creation of the world and the geological account are different—one story written on parchment and the other on the rocks and yet in perfect and eternal accord. The world "day," repeated in the first chapter of Genesis, has thrown into paroxysms of criticism many exegeses. The Hebrew word "yom" of the Bible means sometimes what we call a day, and sometimes it means ages. It may mean 24 hours or 100,000 years. The order of creation as written in the book of Genesis is the order of creation discovered by geologist's crawler. So many Uzzahs have been nervously rushing about for fear the strong oxen of scientific discovery would upset the Bible that I went somewhat apprehensively to look into the matter, when I found that the Bible and geology agree in saying that first were built the rocks, then the plants grew on the earth, then marine creatures were created from minnow to whale, then the wings and throats of aerial choirs were colored and tuned, and the quadrupeds began to bleat and bellow and neigh. What is all this fuss that has been filling the church and the world concerning a fight between Moses and Agassiz?

There is no fight at all. But is not the geological importance of that world was millions of years building antagonistic to the theory of one week's creation in Genesis? No. A great house is to be built. A man takes years to draw to the spot the foundation stone and the heavy timbers. The house is about done, but it is not finished for comfortable residence. Suddenly the owners call in upholsters, plumbers, gas fitters, paper hangers, and in one week it is ready for occupancy.

Now, it requires no stretch of imagination to realize that God could have taken millions of years for the bringing of the rocks and the timbers of this world together, yet only one week more to make it inhabitable and to furnish it for human residence. Remember also that all up and down the Bible the language of the times was of common parlance—and it was not always to be taken literally. Just as we say every day that the world is round when it is not round. It is spheroidal—flattened at the poles and protuberant at the equator. Professor Snell, with his chain of triangles, and professor Varin, with the shortened pendulum of his clock, found it was not round. But we do not become critical of any one who says the world is round. Let us deal as fairly with Moses or Job as we do with each other.

EVERLASTING RIGHT.

But for years good people feared geology, and without any imprecation on their part apprehended that the rocks and mountains would fall on them until Hugh Miller, the elder of St. John's Presbyterian church in Edinburgh and parishoner of Dr. Guthrie, came forth and told the world that there was no contradiction between the mountains and the church, and O. M. Mitchell, a brilliant lecturer before he became brigadier general, dying at Beaufort, S. C., during our civil war, took the platform and spread his map of the strata of rock in the presence of great audiences, and professor Alexander Winchell of Michigan university and professor Taylor Lewis of Union college showed that the "without form and void" of the first chapter of Genesis was the very chaos out of which the world was formulated, the hands of God packing together the land and tossing up the mountains into great heights and flinging down the seas into their great depths. Before God gets through with this world there will hardly be a book of the Bible that will not find confirmation either in archaeology or geology. Exhumed Babylon, Nineveh, Jerusalem, Tyre and

Egyptian hieroglyphics are crying out in the ears of the world: "The Bible is right! All right! Everlasting right!" Geology is saying the same thing, not only confirming the truth about the original creation, but confirming so many passages of the scriptures that I can only slightly refer to them.

But you do not really believe that story of the deluge and the sinking of the mountains under the waves? Tell us something we can believe. "Believe that," say geology, "for how do you account for those seashells and seaweeds and skeletons of sea animals found on the top of some of the highest mountains? If the waters did not sometimes rise above the mountains, how did those seashells and seaweeds and skeletons of sea animals get there? Did you put them there?"

But, now, you do not really believe that story about the storm of fire and brimstone whelming Sodom and Gomorrah, and enveloping Lot's wife in such saline incrustations that she halted, a sack of salt? For the confirmation of that story the geologist goes to that region, and after trying in vain to take a swim in the lake, so thick with salt he cannot swim, it—the lake beneath which Sodom and Gomorrah lie buried, one drop of the water so full of sulphur and brimstone that it stings your tongue, and for hours you can not get rid of the nauseating drop—the scientist then digging down and finding sulphur on top of sulphur, brimstone on top of brimstone, while all around there are jets and crags and peaks of salt, and if one of them did not become the sarcophagus of Lot's wife, they show you how a human being might in that tempest have been halted and packed into a white monument that would defy the ages.

But, now, you do not really believe that New Testament story about the earthquake at the time Christ was crucified, do you? Geology digs down into Mount Calvary and finds the rock ruptured and aslant, showing the work of an especial earthquake for that mountain, and an earthquake which did not touch the surrounding region. Go and look for yourself, and see there a dip and cleavage of rocks as nowhere else on the planet, geology thus announcing an especial earthquake for the greatest tragedy of all the centuries—the assassination of the Son of God.

CONFIRMED BY GEOLOGY.

But you do not really believe that story of the burning of our world at the last day? Geology digs down and finds that the world is already on fire and that the center of this globe is incandescent, molten, volcanic, a burning coal, burning out toward the surface, and the internal fires have so far reached the outside rim that I do not see how the world is to keep from complete conflagration until the prophecies concerning it are fulfilled. The lava poured forth from the mouths of Vesuvius, Mount Etna and Cotopaxi and Kilaua is only the registration of an awful inflammation thousands of miles deep. There are mines in Pennsylvania and in several parts of the world that have been on fire for many years. These coal mines burning down and the internal fires of the earth burning up, after awhile these two fires, the descending and the ascending will meet, and there will occur the universal conflagration of which the Bible speaks when it says, "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

Instead of disbelieving the Bible story about the final conflagration, since I have looked a little into geology, finding that its explorations are all in the line of confirmation of that prophecy, I wonder how this old craft of a world can keep sailing on much longer. It is like a ship on fire at sea, the fact that the hatches are kept down the only reason that it does not become one complete blaze—masts on fire, ratlins on fire, everything from cutwater to aft on fire. After geology has told us how near the internal fires have already burned their way toward the surface, it ought not to be a surprise to us at any time to hear the ringing of the fire bells of a universal conflagration. Oh, I am so glad that geology has been born! Astronomy is grand because it tells us about other worlds. But I must say that I am more interested in our world than in any other world, and geology tells us all about what it was, its cradle and what will be its grave. And this glorious geology is proving itself more and more the friend of theology. Thank God for the testimony of the rocks, the Ten Commandments announced among the split rocks of Sinai, the greatest sermon of Christ preached on the basaltic rocks of the mount of beatitudes, the Saviour dying on the rocks of Golgotha and buried amid the limestone rocks of Joseph's sepulcher, the last day to be ushered in with a rending of rocks and our blessed Lord suggestively entitled "The Rock of Ages." I this day proclaim the banns of a marriage between geology and theology, the rugged bridegroom and the fairest of brides. Let them join their hands, and "whom God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

NEVER YET UPSET.

If anything in the history or condition of the earth seems for the time contradictory of anything in geology, you must remember that geology is all the time correcting itself and more and more coming to harmonization with the great book. In the last century the French scientific association printed a list of eighty theories of geology which had been adopted and afterwards rejected. Lyell, the scientist, announced fifty theories of geology that had been believed in and afterwards thrown overboard. Meanwhile the story of the Bible has not changed at all, and if geology has cast out between 100 and 200 theories which it once considered

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established we can afford to wait until the last theory of geology antagonizing divine revelation shall have been given up.

Now, in this discourse upon the geology of the Bible, or God among the rocks, I charge all agitated and affrighted Uzzahs to calm their pulses about the upsetting of the Scriptures. Let me see! For several hundred years the oxen have been jerking the ark this way and that and pulling it over rough places and trying to stick it in the mud of doubt and kicking with all the power of their hoofs against the sharp goads and trying to pull it into the cool shade away from the heats of rebellion from a God "who will by no means clear the guilty." Yet have you not noticed that the book has never been upset? The only changes made in it were by its learned friends in the revision of the Scriptures. The book of Genesis has been thundered against by the mightiest batteries, yet you cannot today find in all the earth a copy of the Bible which has not the 50 chapters of the first copy of the book of Genesis ever printed, starting with the words "In the beginning God" and closing with Joseph's coffin. Pierce attack on the book of Exodus has been made because they said it was cruel to drown Pharaoh and the story of Mount Sinai was improbable. But the book of Exodus remains intact, and not one of us, considering the cruelties which he would have continued among the brick kilns of Egypt, would have thrown Pharaoh a plank if we had seen him drowning. And Mount Sinai is today a pile of tumbled and tumbled heart, rattling the cataclysm of that mountain when the law was given. And, as to those Ten Commandments, all Roman law, all German law, all English law, all American law worth anything are squarely founded on them. So mighty assault for centuries has been made on the book of Joshua. It was said that the story of the detained sun and moon was an insult to modern astronomy, but that book of Joshua may be found today in the chapel of every university in America, in defiance of any telescope projected from the roof of that university. The book of Jonah has been the target of ridicule for the small wit of ages, but there it stands, with its four chapters inviolate, while geology puts up in its museums remains of sea monsters capable of doing more than the one which swallowed the recreant prophet. There stand the 1,089 chapters of the Bible notwithstanding all the attacks of ages, and there they will stand until they shrivel up in the final fires, which geologists say are already kindled and grow hotter than the furnaces of an ocean steamer as it puts out from New York Narrows for Ham-burg or Southampton.

I should not wonder if from the crypt of ancient cities the inspired manuscripts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, in their own chirography, would be taken, and the epistle which Paul dictated to his amanuensis as well as the one in the apostle's own handwriting. At the same rate of an hour, geological and geologist's confirmation of the scriptures the time will come when the truth of the Bible will no more be doubted than the common almanac, which tells you the days and the months of the year, and the unbelievers will be accounted harmless lunatics. Forward the telescope and the spectro-scope and the chemical batteries and critically examine the ostracodes of the writing. At the same rate of an hour, great mammals on the gray hills of the Andes, and the higher the explorations the better for our cause. As sure as the thunderbolts of the Almighty are stronger than the steel pens of agnostics, the ark of God will ride on unhurt and Uzzah need not fear any disasters upsetting. The apocalyptic angel flying through the air of heaven, proclaiming to all nations, kindred and people and tongues the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ are mightier than the shying off of a yoke of oxen.

THE GOD OF THE ROCKS.

The geology of the Bible shows that our religion is not a namby, nerveless, dilettantish religion. It was projected and has been protected by the God of the rocks. Religion a balm? Oh, yes. Religion a soothing power? Oh, yes. Religion a beautiful sentiment? Oh, yes. But we must have a God of the rocks, a mighty God to defend, a potent God to achieve, a force able to overcome all other forces in the universe. Rose of Sharon and Lily of the Valley is he, combination of all gentleness and tenderness and sweetness? Oh, yes. But if the mighty forces now arrayed for the destruction of the nations are to be met and conquered, we must have a God of the rocks. The "Lion of Judah's tribe," as well as the "Lamb who was slain." One hundred and thirty times does the Bible speak of the rock as defense, as armament, as refuge, as overpowering strength. David, the psalmist, lived among the rocks, and they reminded him of the Almighty, and he ejaculates, "The Lord liveth; blessed be my rock." "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I." And thus as his prayer had been answered, he feels the strength come into his soul, and cries out, "The Lord is my rock." "He shall set me up upon a rock."

Would the Bible present a sublime picture of motherly desperation in defense of her children, it shows us Rixpah on the rocks for three months with distressed hair and wild screams fighting back cultures and jackals from the corpses of her sons. Would the Bible set forth the hardness of the heart and the power of gospel to overcome it, it tells us of the "hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces." Would our Lord represent the durability of his church against all assault he says, "Upon this rock will I build my church and the



gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Would he close his sermon on the mount with a peroration that would resound through centuries, standing on a rock so high that it overlooks like Galilee to the right and on a clear day overlooks the Mediterranean to the left I hear him stamp his foot on the rock beneath him as he cries to the surging multitudes at the base of that rock, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." Ah, my friends, we want a swarthy, a stalwart, a brawny religion. We have a great many people who can sit and gently rock the cradle of their infantile hopes, and can faintly smile when good is accomplished, and walk softly through a sickroom, and live in offensive lives, and manage to tread on no one's prejudices, and their religion is at the best when the wind is from the northwest and the thermometer at 70 degrees F., and they have their spheres, and may God prosper them. But we want in this great battle of God against all forces of perdition some John Knoxes, some Martin Luthers—men of nerve and faith and prowess, like the Huguenots, and the pilgrim fathers, and the Dutch at Leyden keeping back the enemy until the tides of the sea came in. Lord, God of the rocks, help us in this awful struggle in which heaven or hell is at stake and to beat!

How much the rocks have had to do with the course of God in all ages! In the wilderness God's Israel were fed with honey out of the rock. How the rock of Horeb paid Moses back in gushing, rippling, sparkling waters for the two stout strokes with which he struck it! And there stands the rock with name—I guess the longest word in the Bible—sela-hammakleth and it was worthy of a resounding, sesquipedalian nomenclature, for at that rock Saul was compelled to quit his pursuit of David and go home and look after the Philistines, who were making a flank movement. There were the rocks of Bozoz and Sench, between which Jonathan climbed up and sent flying in retreat the garrison of the uncircumcised. And yonder see David and his men hidden in the rock of Adullam and Engedi.

DIVINE DELIBERATION.

But while I go on with my study of the geology of the Bible, or God among the rocks, I get a more intelligent and helpful idea of divine deliberation. These rocks, the growth of thousands of years, ought to show the prolongation of God's plans and cure our impatient, impatient things are not done in a short order. Men without seeing it become critical of the Almighty and think Why does he not do this and do that and do it right away? We feel sometimes as if we could not wait. Well, I guess we will have to wait. God is never in a hurry except about two things. His plans, sweeping through the centuries, are beyond our comprehension. They have such wide circles, such vastness of revolution, such infinitude that we can not compass them. Indeed we would not be much of a God whom we could thoroughly understand. That would not be much of a father who had no thoughts or plans larger than this babe of 1 year old could compass. If God takes millions of years to make a man, do not let us become critical if he takes 20 years of a century or several centuries to do that which we would like to have done immediately. Do not repeat the folly of those who conclude there is no God or that he is not in sympathy with the right and the good because he does not do certain things in the time we set apart for their performance. Do not set us on our elbows, with our tiny hour hand and minute hand, and by it try to correct the clock of the universe, its pendulum taking 500 years to swing this way and 500 years to swing that way. Do not let us set up our little spinning wheel beside the loom in which God weaves sunrises and sunsets and auroras. We have the best of authority for saying that "one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." Do not expect that Uzzah's oxen, even if they do not shy off, but go straight ahead, can keep up with the fire shod lightning.

But that was not a slip of the tongue when I said that God is never in a hurry except in two things. Those two things are when he goes to save a repentant sinner and comfort a praying sinner. The one divine watch, with its tiny hour hand and minute hand, and by it try to correct the clock of the universe, its pendulum taking 500 years to swing this way and 500 years to swing that way. Do not let us set up our little spinning wheel beside the loom in which God weaves sunrises and sunsets and auroras. We have the best of authority for saying that "one day with the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." Do not expect that Uzzah's oxen, even if they do not shy off, but go straight ahead, can keep up with the fire shod lightning.

TRUTH OF THE OMNIPOTENT. But concerning all the vast things of God's government of the universe be patient with the carrying out of plans beyond our measurement. Naturalists

tell me that there are insects that are born and die within an hour and that there are several generations of them in one day, and if one of those July insects of an hour should say: "How slow everything goes! I was told in the chrysalis state by a wondrous instinct that I would find in this world seasons of the year—spring, summer, autumn and winter. But where are the autumnal forests upholstered in fire, and where are the glorious springtimes, with orchards waving their censers of perfume before the altars of the morning? I do not believe there are any autumns or springtimes." If, then, a golden eagle, many years old, in a cage nearby, heard the hum of that complaining insect, it might well answer "O summer insect of an hour, though your life is so short you cannot see the magnificent it is of the seasons, I can testify as to their reality, for I have seen them roll. When I was young, and before I was imprisoned in this cage, I brushed their gorgeous leafage and their fragrant blossoms with my own wing. But in one of my flights high up, the gate of heaven opened and I soul to go in or a seraph to come out, I heard the chiving chanting, 'From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.' And it was on an antiphonal in which all heaven responded, 'From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.' O man! O woman! So far as your earthly existence is concerned, only the insect of an hour, be not impatient with the workings of the Omnipotent and the Eternal!"

And now, for your solace and your safety, I ask you to come under the shelter, and in the deep clefts, and the almighty defense of a rock that is higher than you, higher than any Gibraltar, higher, than the Himalayas—the rock of Ages—that will shelter you from the storm; that will hide you from your enemies; that will stand when the earthquakes of the last day set their pry into the mountains and hurl them into seas boiling with the fires which are already burning their way out from red-hot centers toward the surfaces which are already here and there spouting with fire amid the quaking of the mountains under the look and touch of Him of whom it is said in the sublimest sentence ever written: "He looketh upon the mountains, and they tremble; He toucheth the hills, and they smoke." He you one, and all to the Rock of Ages. And now as before this sermon on the rocks I gave out the significant and appropriate hymn "How firm a foundation ye saints of the Lord" I will give out after this sermon on the rocks the significant and appropriate hymn: Rock of Ages, cleave for me, Let me hide myself in thee!

Modern Magic.

"That," said the father pointing, to the portrait in an illustrated paper, "is Dr. Holbank, who wrote so many schoolbooks. It should be of interest to you."

"Did he write 'Holbank's Arithmetic'?" asked the boy.

"Yes."

"May I have the picture?"

"Certainly—glad to see you taking an intelligent interest in your work. You can cut it out." The boy was of untidy appearance and sallow complexion. He possessed at school among his fellows a reputation for mystery which he thoroughly enjoyed. He did not attempt to maintain it in the more critical and sceptical atmosphere of his home. His name was Williams—Charles Williams; Smith, aged 11, fully believed in him; Thompson, aged 13, had admitted there might be something in it.

As they entered school Charles Williams carefully abstained from speaking to Smith, but pressed a note into his hand.

"What's up?" said Smith, not being entirely ready for the mystery at the moment.

Williams put one finger warningly to his lips and passed on. Smith opened the note. It was inscribed outside: "H. Smith, esq. Secret and Private."

Inside it ran: "See me immediately after school on a urgent matter of business. Your help is needed. (Signed) C. Williams."

Up the street from the school, down by the left to the end of the town, went C. Williams and H. Smith. It was a winter afternoon, and dark. C. Williams paused before a house in process of building, standing alone on the outskirts. The workmen engaged on it had gone.

"There is the place," said Williams. "Follow me. No; wait until the lantern is ready." He produced a small lantern from his pocket and lit it.

"Now we're ready. Ask no questions. 'Shan't we be copied?' asked Smith.

"Who's to cop us?" replied the dauntless and mysterious one.

By means of a ladder they made their way to the first floor, which was still in the skeleton stage. Smith found the ladder good.

"This is rather sport," he said.

"It won't be sport for some one else when I've finished. Be careful—one false step and you're dashed to atoms."

They seated themselves side by side on a rafter, and Smith produced his portrait of Dr. Holbank.

"Do you know who that is?"

"No."

"It's the man who wrote the arithmetic. I've been on his track for years and now I've got him."

"What are you going to do?"

"Kill him; you're to help me. No one will ever know. It's going to be done by magic—the way they used to do in the old days."

"I don't see what you mean."

"See these pins?"

"Well?"

"Have you got anything against the man? Have you ever been 'kept in' for arithmetic?"

"Twice last week. And my answers were wrong."

"Take these pins and dig them into the two eyes of the picture. That's right; now he's blind."

"Whatever we do to the picture happens to the real man. I'm going to dig a pin into the forehead myself. That's where the brain is, and it'll send him mad. That'll teach him to lay traps for us; that'll teach him recurring decimals."

"I say do you think we ought to do this?"

"You don't know any more about revenge than a child. I've been on this man's track for—said that before? Oh, yes; so I did. How many horses does it take to plough a field in ten days if one of the horses is a goat? I'll teach him to ask questions like that! This one is in his heart."

And another pin perforated the centre of the watch chain in the portrait.

"Now he's dead."

"I say," said Smith, agast, "Isn't

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this rather going it? I mean, if it's real."

"It's real enough. To make quite certain, if you'll open the lantern I'll burn that portrait. Not a word to anybody, mind; this is a hanging business if we're caught."

"You might have told me that before. If I believed it."

"You'll believe it all right when you hear he's dead. Come on—down the ladder. I'll see if any of the police are waiting for us—you stand back." He peered out cautiously. "Right; the coast's clear. Now then, run for your life."

"Father," said the magician that night, "is Dr. Holbank dead?"

"Of course. He died a week ago or more. That's why they put his portrait in the paper."

"Does it say anything about him?"

"Only that he died recently—it doesn't give the date—and that he was the author of some well-known school-books."

"I should like to cut that out, too. I want to show it to another boy."

"Certainly." As I've always said, an intelligent interest in your work is what I like to see."

And C. Williams took that obituary paragraph to school two days later, and his reputation for magical powers, combined with a total want of principle, is on the increase.—Barry Plain, in Black and White.

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